

# **The Business Savvy Project Manager, by Gary Heerkens, published 2005**

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## ***Book Review by Krish Soundararajan***

***Krish wrote this review for Dr. Gary Klein's Project Management class at UCCS University of Colorado, Colorado Springs, Colorado.***

The key contribution of the book is illustration of business functions that are not directly related to the traditional project management. The call to measure actual project results long after completion, translation of soft / intangible benefits to quantifiable numbers and the understanding of risk tolerance are some of the highlights. The book briefly covers accounting, finance and organization behavior with very little focus on project management. On the positive side, the book provides a comprehensive overview of business for the busy project manager in walking across the practices and realities within an organization. However, many of the activities cited as "must do" in the book are well beyond the control of a typical project / program managers and as such may be of little value on what or how project management can mitigate it.

The emphasis across is book is to focus on identifying, justifying, selecting and executing the right project that is strategically aligned with the firms objective. At every stage, the project manager should look at the strategic intent and revalidate the project relevancy. The coverage on finance and accounting is brief and valuable refresher to those who already have the knowledge, but too light to make an impact for the project managers. On the subject of estimating the financial benefits and cost, the author encourages to consider the benefits to all departments (outside the sponsors) and to consider the cash flows of various departments even if it is with various degree of effectiveness.

The discussion on strategic intent of projects is noteworthy in that it makes an assumption that project managers are somehow involved or consulted in the linkage from strategic intent to projects. A project manager should be actively tuned in to the firm's network as they are called into action after the program or project is floated. The lack of it will result in "soft" and "hard" rationing arbitrarily in spite of the prioritization matrix. Sometimes, the projects are initiated due to solutions from over-zealous people in strategic departments who don't stop with strategic focus. Project Managers may end up working on a solution that may not be appropriate and business savvy project managers can alter the course with sufficient knowledge and network.

The project management area coverage of project justification, selection and authorization is a good take. Inherent problem in justification exists when different stakeholders have benefits of varying degrees, have varying degree of investments and risk from the project. The author encourages writing and presenting a business case and shows a possible template. Another highlight involves the myth of many managers to treat internal labor as "free" resources in the project. Project Managers must realize that it is a real cost and a legal requirement in accounting. On the subject of risk, the book shows how a firm may view each of the risks. Some are risk-aggressive and willingly pursue projects for higher returns while risk shy firms choose conservative methods.

In summary, the book appears to summarize a lot of material from business related textbooks with very little focus on project management. Readers may be better off with books on specific and in-depth business titles.

**Editor's Note:** [Thanks Krish! Readers, if you would like to make a comment to review author Krish Soundararajan, or add a comment on this page in the website, contact us!](#)